

RICHMOND POLICE DEPARTMENT



11-21 METRO-AVIATION UNIT OPERATING MANUAL

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Chief of Police or Designee

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PURPOSE

The City of Richmond and the Counties of Chesterfield and Henrico operate a joint Aviation Team. The Metro Aviation Unit will provide aerial observation and support to all elements of the Police Department. A schedule of normal operating hours will be maintained. During scheduled operating hours, when not responding to calls or detailed to special assignments, the Metro Aviation Unit will conduct routine aerial patrol of specified high crime areas.

PROCEDURE

The instructions, conditions and limitations of usage of the Metro Aviation Unit shall be as follows:

1. All requests for immediate services of aircraft will be initiated through the Division of Emergency Communications (DEC). Predictable needs such as photography or extended surveillance should be coordinated with the Metro Aviation Unit directly. The following exceptions will apply:
2. Emergency, urgent or short notice requests should be made directly to the Metro Aviation Unit at 226-9837. The Metro Aviation Unit supervisors shall evaluate the request and authorize the assignment.
3. Requests that shall require a long-term commitment of manpower or equipment shall be directed to the Officer-in-Charge of the Special Events Division Tactical Unit for authorization. He/She will forward the approved request to the Metro Aviation Unit.
4. Weather and equipment conditions can and do affect the availability of aerial support. The pilot in command of the aircraft shall have sole authority to refuse any request when he/she deems conditions to be unsafe or in violation of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations.

Aerial Patrol

1. Aerial Patrols are based on crime analysis, intelligence information and other assessments of needs identified by operational components of the participating agencies and submitted to the Metro Aviation Unit Sergeant.
2. Special directed aerial patrol requests should be documented as prescribed above and forwarded to the Officer-in-Charge of the Special Events Division Tactical Unit. He/She will forward the documented request to the Metro Aviation Unit Supervisor.
3. The aircraft's ability to quickly respond, evaluate the situation, and provide useful information to responding ground units, enhance officer safety and can alter response requirements, thereby maximizing police efficiency.

Aerial Surveillance

1. Whenever possible, surveillance requests should be made in advance. Metro Aviation should be included in the planning of extended surveillance plans if their services are anticipated. Unscheduled surveillance requests will be honored if sufficient aircraft and personnel are available. Sections or agencies requesting surveillances are required to provide an observer for surveillances in excess of (30) thirty minutes duration.
2. In situations where a target remains stationary for more than 30 minutes, ground teams will maintain surveillance until the target becomes mobile again. Aerial surveillance is inefficient when dealing with a fixed target. The aircraft should not circle a location over long periods of time.
3. Units requesting surveillances lasting longer than 30 minutes will provide an aerial observer.

Aerial Transports

The Metro Aviation Unit is available for the transportation of Department members on official business. All requests for this service shall be made to the Metro Aviation Unit Supervisor. Examples of official business may include, but are not limited to:

1. School/Conference Training;
2. Suspect/Victim Interviews;
3. Evidence Retrieval; and,
4. Suspect/Arrestee Extradition

The Metro Aviation Unit Sergeant or designee may refuse any requests he/she determines may be beyond the safe capacity of the aircraft or flight personnel.

Aerial Extradition

Since the Unit provides transportation of detainees, please refer to G.O. 701-1 and 1001-5 as guidelines to follow for transporting these types of individuals. In addition:

1. The fugitive coordinator or his/her supervisor will promptly notify the Metro Aviation Unit of the need for extradition services.
2. The "Request for Transport" form will be completed and two pilots will be assigned for the mission. If a prisoner of the opposite sex is to be transported, one pilot will be assigned and the requesting jurisdiction must provide a sworn officer who is of the same sex as the prisoner to act as a guard and will assume all non-pilot responsibilities relating to the extradition.
3. The pilot in command has the discretion to postpone or cancel the extradition for safety reasons due to hazardous weather conditions, maintenance, violent or ill prisoner(s), etc.
4. The prisoner transports will be limited to a 750 nautical mile radius of the Richmond International Airport.

Search of aircraft and prisoner(s)

The transport aircraft will be searched for contraband and weapons before the prisoner boards the aircraft and after the prisoner exits the aircraft. The prisoner will be searched before boarding the aircraft. Prisoner searches shall be conducted in accordance with department policy.

Security and control of prisoner(s)

1. Leg irons shall be secured around each ankle with the connecting chain behind the center support post of the rear seat. The keyholes shall face upward and the double locking pins engaged.
2. The waist chain shall be threaded through the prisoner's belt loop (when practical) with the excess chain passing through the handcuff receiver loop and secured to a loop in the chain near the prisoner's hip.
3. The handcuffs shall be secured around each wrist with the connecting chain passing through the handcuff receiver loop of the waist chain. The keyholes shall face forward with the double locking pins engaged.
4. The prisoner shall be seated in the rear seat behind the pilot and the seat belt shall be fastened around the prisoner's waist. If two prisoners are to be transported, the second prisoner shall be seated in the rear seat behind the co-pilot's seat.
5. The pilot and co-pilot guard shall secure their firearms in pouches or issued holsters.
6. Other weapons or flammable agents shall be permitted aboard the aircraft only with the permission of the pilot in command.
7. Pertinent documentation and property (e.g. waiver of extradition, medications, medical release forms, identification, etc.) shall be searched and secured in the aircraft's baggage compartment by the pilot in command.

Transportation of ill, injured, handicapped or mentally ill prisoners

1. If a prisoner complains of injury or illness prior to the pilot in command or guard assuming custody, he/she must receive prompt medical treatment for his/her condition or the consequences of the condition. If medical treatment is received, the pilot in command, or the guard as appropriate, will obtain copies of all available medical forms.
2. If a prisoner complains of injury or illness during the flight, the pilot in command shall have the discretion to determine the legitimacy and extent of the injury or illness and either land as soon as practical or continue the flight to the final destination.
3. If it is determined that the prisoner has an airborne communicable disease (i.e. tuberculosis) or a mental illness which could manifest itself in physical acts of violence, then he/she shall not be transported in the aircraft.
4. If a prisoner is handicapped, he/she shall be restrained and transported only at the discretion of the pilot in command.
5. If a flight is to be delayed for an extended period of time, the Metro Aviation Unit supervisor shall be notified. Furthermore, if a flight is diverted or delayed while en route

and an overnight stay is necessary, the prisoner will be housed in the local jail at the expense of the jurisdiction who requested the extradition.

6. If the prisoner is a juvenile, he/she shall be transported at the discretion of the Metro Aviation Unit supervisor.
7. If a prisoner were to escape before takeoff or after landing, the jurisdiction where the escape occurred shall be notified immediately and the Metro Aviation Unit supervisor shall also be notified.

TRAINING

Pilot Applicants / Aerial Unit Members

Applicants must be police officers in compliance with established requirements for specialized assignments and meet the following requirements:

- a. Must have at least three years law enforcement or comparable experience and/or a fixed wing certification(s) shall be preferred during the selection process.
- b. Must meet all FAA qualifications for pilot licensing and remain current in all FAA and Team requirements.
- c. Only those officers certified by the Metro Aviation Unit Training Officer will be permitted to operate the aircraft.
- d. Officers shall be prohibited from all off-duty employment until they receive their instrument rating.

Members must obtain a Private Pilot's License, police pilot training, and endorsement by the Flight Training Officer before being released for solo aviation duties. Unless unusual circumstances dictate otherwise:

- a. A Private Pilot's rating shall be obtained within the first six months of assignment to the Unit.
- b. An Instrument Rating shall be obtained within eighteen months of obtaining a Private Pilot's rating.
- c. A Commercial Rating should be obtained within one year of obtaining an Instrument Rating.
- d. Any need to deviate from these timelines will be evaluated by the Unit Sergeant.

Pilots are personally responsible for maintaining the flight proficiency consistent with his or her ratings and Unit standards. The pilot shall remain current in the above certifications and accomplish a flight review within the prescribed time (Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61.56 and 61.57). Each pilot shall possess a valid second class medical certificate issued under Title 14 Code of Federal Regulation Part 97.201-215.

No person, other than those approved by the Unit Sergeant, may operate Unit aircraft. *Operation of the aircraft is defined as “manipulation of flight control surfaces while the aircraft is taxiing or in flight.”* Nothing in this section would prevent persons from attempting to operate the aircraft in a *bona fide* emergency where the pilot has become incapacitated.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

The Metro Aviation Unit is capable of providing aerial photographs of any location in the metropolitan area upon request. Requests for aerial photography shall be coordinated directly with the Team at the Hanger by calling (804) 226-9837.

EQUIPMENT

The team members shall maintain the following equipment on the aircraft, to be utilized when needed on patrols:

1. Camera
2. Safety Harness
3. Radios/Radio Communications Headsets
4. Binoculars
5. Flashlight
6. Maps and Charts

All equipment shall be assigned to individual unit member and inspected at least annually by the OIC.

TEAM INFORMATION

The Metro-Aviation Team’s hours of operation are as follows:

Monday-Friday: 0700 hours – 0200 hours

Saturday: 1800 hours – 0200 hours

Sunday: Regular Day Off

The **Metro Aviation Unit**’s address is:

5757 Huntsman Road

Richmond International Airport

INTERAGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors:

1. The Richmond Police Special Events Division Tactical Unit O.I.C. reviews and approves or denies requests for long-term services of the aircraft made by the Richmond Police Department's (RPD) personnel.
2. The Henrico County Sergeant-in-charge of the Metro Aviation Unit directly supervises the daily activities of the RPD pilots.
3. The RPD Special Events Sergeant performs administrative duties such as maintaining the employees Leave Records, conducting Performance Evaluations, and other personnel matters for the RPD pilots.